

February 2005



MONTANA GEAR UP

GAINING EARLY AWARENESS & READINESS FOR
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education / Montana University System

GEARUP



Inside this issue:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director's Message• Welcome Back G. Bruce Meyers | 1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GEAR UP Spotlight: Hardin and the North Central Region• Achievement Grant Report | 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigating the New Website• Winter Liaison Meeting Report• February Reminders | 3 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2005 National Youth Leadership Summit• GEAR UP Staff Directory | 4 |

Director's Message: by Sandy Merdinger

It was great to spend some time with GEAR UP liaisons and others at the winter liaisons meeting held in Chico this week. I love to hear about all of the good work that is going on out in our GEAR UP schools. It isn't always without some stress and strife, but no one ever said that good things come easy. I can't thank you enough for your good work – keep it up!

In a few days we will be heading to grant writing training for the new grant. After reviewing the draft application we are pleased to see that the application is for a six-year grant, rather than five years. The grant application requires dollar-for-dollar match and state grants must include early intervention and scholarship components. Given the new 40-page limit for narrative, we must write in 40 pages what was written in 120 pages for the first grant. It will be difficult to paint the same picture with this limitation. We will once again use the cohort approach in working with GEAR UP schools so entire classes of students will receive GEAR UP services. We will start no later than the seventh grade with cohort classes and intend to add a new cohort every year of the grant, rather than just for three years as was done in the current grant.

Soon we will be sending out letters of invitation to potential GEAR UP schools based upon this year's free and reduced lunch data. Schools must have at least 50% of enrolled students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Current GEAR UP schools that are eligible, as well as other eligible schools, will be invited to apply.

According to the draft, the final application will be made available February 4 with a submission deadline of April 4, 2005. Watch the newsletter for updates on the grant.

Welcome back G. Bruce Meyers who re-joined the GEAR UP pro-

Welcome G. Bruce Meyers:

gram as the OPI GEAR UP Specialist. Bruce will assume grant management duties for the 11 eastern GEAR UP schools previously handled by Everall Fox and Annette Walstad. Bruce's many years of experience in education, including his service as the first Montana GEAR UP Director, will lend a valuable perspective as we look toward a new grant. Previously, he also served as the Interim Dean of Instruction at Ilisagvik College in Barrow Alaska, the Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Arizona and the Director of the American Indian Resource Center at the University of Minnesota. Throughout his career, Bruce has delivered the following message: "Students, pursue your dreams; parents, inspire your children; administrators and school staff, dare your students to capitalize on their innate gifts and talents to accomplish what seems to be the impossible." Bruce has a B.A. in sociology from the University of Montana and a masters in higher education administration from MSU-Bozeman. He is an enrolled member of the Chippewa-Cree tribe in Montana and grew up on the Rocky Boy reservation. Welcome back Bruce!



Welcome back Bruce!

The GEAR UP Spotlight: submitted by Hardin and the North Central Region Schools

Hardin:

Hardin GEAR UP and the Rural Health Alliance teamed up to present a panel discussion for 9th graders about health care related careers. The panel was made up of local health care professionals, many of whom are former Hardin High School graduates, who spoke about opportunities, obstacles and routes to a career in the health care field.

One of the important points made by all of the panelists was that students need to take upper division math and science classes if they are planning to pursue a career in any health-related field. Todd Hansen, Program Administrator for the Montana Family Medicine Residency Program said that “all of the speakers emphasized the principles of working hard, staying out of trouble, and never giving up on your dreams.” Panelists also discussed scholarships and let students know that if they want to go to college, the money will be there.

Mr. Hansen said that the Rural Health Alliance is available to assist other high schools in the region with similar presentations at no cost. If you would like further information please contact him at toddh@ycchd.org.

North Central Region:

In December 2004, the 1st north central regional GEAR-UP meeting was held. This was started to help keep our area informed of what is going on in the GEAR-UP world and was modeled after the other regional meetings that Brady, Lincoln, Browning Vaughn and Heart Butte have been doing from the beginning of the grant. The meeting started by checking in with each other and sharing best practices. Annette Walstad sent a sheet of questions regarding each individual school, that we spent the majority of the time talking about. We also tried to think of some catchy name to call ourselves and came up with several great names for example MOGU CRUE (Montana GEAR-UP Central Region Unique Experience), and Region 6 (following the fish and game regions); then just decided to call ourselves the North Central Region. The remaining time was spent on the new grant. Being our first meeting, we are all in the learning stage and getting to know each other. James Hodgson felt it was very beneficial for the group to meet, and discuss the various topics of GEAR-UP. In March, James plans to attend the regional meeting in Brady to see how their meetings go and to take ideas back to the new group.

The meeting was held at Montana State University Northern, and was attended by Janice Parker from Box Elder, Jolie Martinez of Hays, and James Hodgson of Harlem. We were missing Juanita Roasting Stick, and Annette Walstad. The group will continue meeting every other month for the remainder of the current grant and beyond. If anyone is interested in coming to the next meeting, it will be held March 10, 2005 at MSUN. If you would like more information please don't hesitate to contact James Hodgson at jamesh@harlem-hs.k12.mt.us.



Achievement Grant Report:

This year the Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program (MGSLP), which administers the Achievement Grant program for Montana GEAR UP, received 317 Achievement Grant applications, from 18 of the 21 GEAR UP schools. Out of the 317 that applied, 261 grants were awarded in January. The award consists of a \$1,000 grant, which is to be used toward the cost of the recipient's postsecondary education. Achievement Grant award certificates will be mailed or delivered to GEAR UP liaisons this spring, and awards will be held in an account for up to 18 months after the recipients graduate from high school and are ready to put their funds to use for higher education. The grant may be used at any educational institution in the United States that meets the eligibility requirements for the Montana Family Education Savings Program. This includes two-year and four-year colleges as well as many technical institutions. Congratulations and good luck to all of this year's recipients!

Navigating the New Website: We are very excited to announce that the new GEAR UP website is officially up and running!

Cyrus Malkin deserves special recognition for bringing it together. The address for the site is the same as always – www.gearup.montana.edu, but the overall look and layout are much different. Along the top navigation bar, you will find links to the GEAR UP calendar, the GEAR UP assessment website, as well as search and contact buttons. Down the left-hand side of the site are the main navigation buttons: “About Montana GEAR UP”, with programmatic information; “News & Events”, with links to our monthly newsletter and calendars; “Links & Resources” and “Contact Us”; and the “For GEAR UP Schools” button. On this page you will find access to everything necessary for the schools’ administration of GEAR UP – financial forms, implementation plans, budget narratives, scholarship & grant information, as well as other important information for GEAR UP schools. The site will continue to be updated so keep checking back often for important news and information! Comments and suggestions are encouraged and should be sent to Cyrus at cmalkin@oche.montana.edu.

Lively discussion, great attendance, super food and a dip in the hot springs (for some) were all

Winter Liaison Meeting Report:

enjoyed at the recent winter liaisons meeting held January 31 - February 1 at Chico Hot Springs. Nineteen of our 21 schools were represented to provide input on writing the new grant which was a major focus for the meeting. Andi Rankin did a great job keeping the group on track to learn their unique perspectives about what’s important for Montana students and how GEAR UP can address their needs.

As always, the agenda was full. Other topics covered at the meeting included: a report from Mary Taylor with information about grants for GEAR UP students and what a strong scholarship application looks like; the new GEAR UP website was unveiled; Libby Siebens, now with the Student Assistance Foundation, gave a report about the upcoming College Goal Sunday on February 13 (For more information visit their website at: www.collegegoalmt.org); Tina Wagner gave an impromptu update on financial aid topics; Andi Rankin and Cy Malkin provided information regarding the assessment website; and Annette Walstad provided survey results collected from last years seniors, an update on college visits and the college visit manual. Annette also provided a wealth of great information on college survival skills for GEAR UP graduates.

The agenda for the Spring liaisons meeting, which will be held May 3rd, is quickly filling up and we look forward to seeing you then.

February Reminders:

- College Goal Sunday is Sunday, February 13, 2005. Make arrangements now to get students to one of the 13 different locations. For more information contact Libby Siebens at 406-495-7800 or 1-800-610-1479.
- The National Youth Leadership Summit will be held July 16-20 in San Francisco in conjunction with the national GEAR UP conference. Student applications are due March 1, 2005. For more information read page four and visit www.edpartnerships.org.
- Mid-term Fiscal Reports are due February 28, 2005.
- The deadline for entries in the assessment website is March 14.
- This year’s Title I conference is being held February 22-24 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Registration information is available online at www.btc.montana.edu/conf/titleone/register.
- Please submit your GEAR UP Spotlight articles by the 20th of the month to be included in a future newsletter to Peter Butler at pbutler@oche.montana.edu.
- This newsletter is also available online by visiting www.gearup.montana.edu.
- Please let us know if someone would like to be added to the newsletter distribution list.
- Have a Happy Valentines Day!!

2005 Youth Leadership Summit

Montana GEAR UP encourages students to apply for the National Youth Leadership Summit that will be held in conjunction with the National GEAR UP conference July 16-20 in San Francisco, California. The summit is specifically for GEAR UP students who will complete the 10th, 11th or 12th grade by the end of the 2004-05 school year. The goal of this summit is to allow students to voice their opinions, concerns, and suggestions pertaining to education through a report to the conference attendees and national leaders in education.

The Summit is a great opportunity for students to meet other youth leaders from across the country and to collaborate on a presentation addressing student-centered perspectives and the opinions of youth in the education reform debate. Student scholars are selected based on their academic achievements, leadership roles and letters of recommendation. Scholars will be joined by four returning alumni scholars from the previous year's summit who will help guide them as they work to create a summit report focused on what educators should consider when designing strategies and programs aimed at improving student achievement. This report will also be used to help business and community leaders, policy makers, and educators understand the issues that students believe to be important for improving student success and strengthening the education system as a whole. This is a great opportunity to engage in discussions regarding the challenges and successes facing education today, to compare and contrast experiences with students from a variety of other backgrounds, and participate in leadership development, teambuilding, and brainstorming sessions.

To apply, a student must complete an application form including transcripts, a personal statement and two scholar reference forms. Applications are to be postmarked no later than **March 1, 2005**. Application materials and information including "tips for a successful application" are available to download on the NCCEP website www.edpartnerships.org. If you have additional questions regarding the 2005 Youth Leadership Summit, please contact Marie Hughes at marie_hughes@edpartnerships.org or by calling 202-530-1135.

Montana GEAR UP
Office of the Commissioner
of Higher Education
2500 Broadway
PO Box 203101
Helena, MT 59620-3101

Peter Butler, Grant Manager
444-0848, pbutler@oche.montana.edu

Kelly Hert, Federal Accountant
444-0321, khert@oche.montana.edu

Cyrus Malkin, Administrative
Associate 444-0056,
cmalkin@oche.montana.edu

Bruce Marks, MGSLP Director
444-0351, bmarks@mgsllp.state.mt.us

Aaron Mayernik, Financial Aid
Outreach 444-0135,
amayernik@mgsllp.state.mt.us

Sandy Merdinger, Montana GEAR UP
Director 444-0317,
smerdinger@oche.montana.edu

G. Bruce Meyers, OPI GEAR UP
Specialist 444-7490, bmeyers@mt.gov

Andrea Rankin, Program Manager
444-0056, arankin@oche.montana.edu

Mary Taylor, State Grant Coordinator
444-0638, mtaylor@mgsllp.state.mt.us

Tina Wagner, Financial Aid Outreach
444-0350, twagner@mgsllp.state.mt.us

Annette Walstad, Program Manager
444-0598, awalstad@oche.montana.edu

Montana GEAR UP website:
www.gearup.montana.edu

Montana Guaranteed Student Loan
Program website:
www.mgsllp.state.mt.us

National GEAR UP website:
www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index